

289/12-13

16 February 1978

Brig

OLC #78-0289/13

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Meeting with William G. Miller, Staff Director
of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence

1. On 15 February 1978, in a 90-minute luncheon, a useful exchange was held on the overall subject of SSCI's attitudes toward CIA.

2. Miller's central theme, which he reiterated throughout the lunch, was that although relations between the SSCI and CIA are vastly improved over what they were two years ago, there are still areas of great concern. He said that the SSCI is not satisfied with the degree of information and insight which it now has into our sensitive collection operations or our foreign liaison relationships. I remarked that I had been told that the DCI's April meeting on sensitive sources had been highly successful and that he had felt the Committee was satisfied on this score. Miller strongly demurred, saying that the Committee believed that the DCI was very new in his job and needed more time to get into what is admittedly a difficult oversight issue, i.e., how to increase the SSCI's sense of confidence in our internal review procedures on sensitive collection operations. Various ways of approaching this problem were discussed. Miller reacted positively to the suggestion that three or four specific sensitive operations could be discussed before the Committee (without naming specific sources), outlining for them the review process which had been used to judge whether the risks of the operation justified the possible gains. He stressed that the SSCI would want to know the degree to which the Department of State and/or Ambassador concerned had been brought into the review process. Miller was asked if he was trying to put the SSCI in the position of giving approval of specific operations. He said he was not trying to do this and was aware that the sensitivity of a particular operation is a changing thing and that the number of sensitive operations would preclude our briefing the SSCI in detail on each of them. What he hopes can be achieved is to acquaint the SSCI sufficiently with our

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interim procedures so that a sense of confidence in this system can be imparted to the Committee. Miller said flatly that there is still "a marked lack of confidence in the DDO" on the part of the SSCI membership, fueled in part "by people from the DDO coming to the Committee" with concerns about how the Directorate operates. Miller indicated that some of these were ex-employees and was careful not to rule out the possibility that some are present employees. While making no commitment to accede to his wish, it was suggested and agreed that perhaps the best approach to this problem would be to take several "problem cases" to the SSCI and discuss with them how the final operational decision, go or no go, was reached.

3. Turning to the subject of liaison relationships Miller said there was "deep cynicism" among the Committee about our liaison relationships. He said that many members are convinced that CIA uses foreign liaison services to do those things which CIA is prohibited from doing by charter or Executive Order. He cited the [redacted] as two examples of this. I said that I would be delighted to go down and talk to the staff members on the subject of liaison in order to gain a clearer grasp of what their concerns are and how we can alleviate them. Miller said this would be helpful and that he would be in touch with me about setting up an appointment.

4. Another item of concern Miller mentioned is the area of CI. The Committee feels that too little is being done (several briefings have been given the staff on this subject, perhaps more are necessary). Miller added that the Committee has gathered that a number of people from CI Staff have been removed by the recent cuts and that this fueled the Committee's fear that we are weakening ourselves in this area at a time when the KGB is becoming more aggressive. Miller said there was no great overall concern on the Committee's part regarding the cuts in strength which the DDO is taking. He felt that the way the cuts notices had been delivered to their recipients was "clumsy," but this was the only pejorative remark he made on this score.

5. Asked about the Committee's feeling for covert action, he stated that this was not something the Committee is worried about. They feel that covert action is under control and well reviewed.

6. I responded to Miller by saying that I was both surprised and disappointed to learn that the SSCI's attitudes toward the Directorate were still as riddled with negative feelings as he indicated. Miller said things were on the upswing but that the members had not yet been told enough about our internal review processes or the nature of our relations with liaison services to have any sense that the Agency was conducting a broad and objective review of the costs and risks of our more sensitive operations. He said "we feel it is wrong for threat assessments to be made only by those directly involved."

7. I suggested that what might be helpful was a more informal exchange process with the Committee. I asked if the Committee felt that it only wished to be briefed by Deputy Directors or the Director himself. Miller replied that the Committee would be delighted to be briefed by anyone, particularly those directly concerned with operations under review. (It was in this vein that I suggested my willingness to brief the staff on the subject of liaison relationships.)

8. I expressed to Miller my hope that eventually CIA could begin to deal in a more collegial fashion with the Committee. Miller said he shared this hope and that things are moving in that direction.

9. Other items of interest:

- Miller will be moving out of his position but would not say when. He said he felt he should be replaced by someone "with foreign affairs experience."

- He expects charter legislation recently submitted by the SSCI to take one and a half to two years to get through Congress.

- Personally speaking, Miller finds the NID "unreadable." He would much prefer a more traditional one-item-per-page presentation.

- He finds NFAC briefings very good in terms of current developments, but deficient in depth. ("When I ask why the Ethiopians and Somalians are fighting in the first place, all I get is a shrug of the shoulders.")

10. The luncheon was very beneficial for me and I emerged with a much clearer feeling on a number of issues. At this point my horseback estimate is that we can continue to deal on a structured and formal basis with the SSCI and continue the slow rate of attitudinal improvement thus far achieved. My recent experience with an equally skeptical group [redacted] (FSI and INR group) leads me to feel that a more forthcoming posture with the SSCI might gain us more in the long run. I would be delighted to talk on this subject further.

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[redacted]
Donald P. Gregg

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cc: HPD-ADD

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